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Tibetan Friendship Group Australia (Inc.)

Patrons: His Holiness the Dalai Lama
Joan M Wilson OAM

TFG CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2022



Christmas is around the corner and all of us at TFG wish our wonderful sponsors and friends and their families a happy, peaceful and relaxed Festive Season.

May 2023 bring health and happiness to you all.

Your generosity in supporting Tibetan refugees in India, the children, nuns, elderly and performing arts students is so very much appreciated.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As we come to the end of another year of Covid, floods and weather-related disasters around the world, let us hope for a peaceful Christmas. Here at TFG, the committee has continued working to help support Tibetan Settlements in India, thanks to the generosity of those of you who make donations and those who sponsor individuals. The committee continues to hold meetings virtually as we find this to be efficient, particularly as many of our members live out of Sydney.

May you all enjoy a special time with friends and family this Christmas.

TFG PEOPLE



Jennifer Dietrich Sponsor and Settlement Secretary for Delek Tibetan Hospital.

Jennifer has been a sponsor for over 10 years, sponsoring Tsering Dolker of Puruwala. When the sponsorship commenced, Tsering Dolker was in Primary School, then High School, then Nursing Studies in Mangalore, Southern India. Last year she completed postgraduate studies with the hope of working overseas. Currently Tsering Dolker is taking a break from nursing to work in the family business over winter.

Her interest in becoming involved with Delek Hospital arose from her profession as a Health Psychologist, with a long career in Rehabilitation and working in a hospital. Jennifer is now retired and spends her time reading, painting and learning German.

Bruce Lewin Conn Sponsor for Sambhota Tibetan School Society

When I started sponsoring these great kids, I had no idea how much I would enjoy receiving news of their progress, especially photographs of these children beaming their wonderful smiles back at you. It also humbles me to realise that such a small financial contribution can make such a big difference.

I very much look forward to the next letter/update/photograph from the children.

The photo is of my wife, myself and the 'fur-kids'. Jane and Bruce Conn, Nelson (GSD puppy) and Tilly.



A LITTLE BIT OF TFG HISTORY!

HISTORY OF TIBETAN FRIENDSHIP GROUP

The Tibetan Friendship Group was founded in India in 1960, by English born Mrs. Freda Bedi, (M.A. Oxford Univ). At the time of the 10th March 1959 uprising in Tibet, she was working with the Indian Ministry of External Affairs and also with the United Nations Social Services Planning Commission. With Tibetan refugees flooding into India, Prime Minister Nehru asked Mrs. Bedi to assist in their settlement. After working and studying amongst the Tibetan people, Mrs. Bedi was ordained a Tibetan Buddhist nun. She later, received the highest ordination ever bestowed on a nun of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition since the 8th Century, Gelongma K.T. Khéchog Palmo. She formed the Tibetan Friendship Group among her friends and contacts of that time, and following world interest she appointed Honorary Secretaries in U.S.A., France, South Africa, U.K.

INTRODUCTION OF TIBETAN FRIENDSHIP GROUP TO AUSTRALIA

In 1968 the late Mrs. Valerie Grogan visited Sikkim, after attending an International Commission of Jurists Conference in Bangalore India, with her husband Peter. Her host in Gangtok, Sikkim, was Mr. Har Mander Singh, who, in 1959 as the Political Officer of the Kameng Frontier Division, had granted political asylum to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, when he crossed into the region (or "into exile"), on behalf of the Government of India. Mr. Singh also arranged for Mrs. Grogan to visit Rumtek Monastery to view a special dance ceremony, and she was seated between His Holiness Gyalwa Karmapa and Mrs. Bedi, who told her about the Tibetan Friendship Group and invited her to become the Australian Honorary Secretary. On return to Australia Mrs. Grogan began seeking sponsors and support and TFG Australia was born!

HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA'S FIRST VISIT TO SYDNEY

In 1982 TFG had the honour of hosting His Holiness on his first visit to Sydney. TFG hosted H.H. for lunch on the John Cadman and he is pictured below with Joan Wilson and the late Valerie Grogan of TFG



TFG STALL

Everyone was looking forward to holding the first TFG stall in several years. A free stall location had been booked at Rozelle Market, the wonderful stall donations had been prepared for sale, prayer flags were ready to hang and TFG brochures ready to distribute. TFG committee members travelled from the mid-North coast and Blue Mountains to help and then – the weather let us down!!! A very rainy weekend was forecast and the difficult decision to cancel was made.

However, on a positive note, stall donations were assembled and priced and committee members got together in person. Friends of TFG who were present bought some of the donated goods and already over \$600 has been raised.

Special thanks must go to the following people in particular for their generous donations of Tibetan goods to the stall:

Jenny Wardell

Margaret Huenerbein

Sophie Reeves

Joan Griffin

Here are a few interesting stories of the donations:

We had no idea what this unusual timber block was but a TFG member showed it to a Tibetan Khenpo she knows. He said it was called a Tsagung and that it was most auspicious to find one in Australia. It is an historical object used in monasteries for hundreds of years to make auspicious symbols and objects by pressing tsampa into the carved wooden grooves. Once the tsampa hardens it is used in pujas. On behalf of TFG it was donated to the Tibet Collection.



TSAGUNG

A Tsagung is a xylograph wooden block press. It uses tsampa (made from barley flour) and is used in Tantric ceremonies to clear obstacles and evil spirits.

BEAUTIFUL SILVER SNUFF BOTTLE

Part of a collection of jewellery donated by ex-TFG Treasurer, Jenny Wardell



YAK HANGING

Bought by a TFG member for her workplace: a hanging of a country scene with yaks, embroidered on silk from the Norbulingka Institute in Dharamsala, which will hang in the new meeting room of the Multicultural Health Centre, where new Tibetan migrants are welcomed.



DETAIL OF THANKA

Beautiful thanka of the Buddhist deity, Hayagriva with gold-painted details.

COLLECTION OF BOOKS ON TIBET AND THE HIMALAYAN AREAS

Two boxes of amazing books were donated by the late Margaret Huenerbein. This superb collection includes older and more recent books on Tibet and mountain climbing in Nepal, Tibet and the Himalayan areas.

Margaret passed away in 2020 but what a life she led! She was an adventurer and in the 1970's went on many expeditions to Mt Everest and the Himalayas and thus her interest in Tibet was born. In the 1980's Margaret was also part of the Australian Antarctic Division exploration team. I am sure Margaret would be happy to know that her books will go to people also interested in Tibet and the Himalayas and at the same time raise much needed funds for Tibetan refugees in India.



STUNNING PHOTOS OF TIBET

This collection of beautiful photos (19cm x 30cm) donated by Sophie Reeves showcasing Tibetan nomads as they were in Tibet many years ago, are ready to frame. Anyone interested in purchasing one please contact Pam on 0439 400 622. Cost \$45.

AN INTERESTING ARTICLE ON THE NORBULINGKA INSTITUTE DHARAMSALA

Tenzin Gelek, Traditional Tibetan Statue Maker



Norbulingka, close to Dharamsala in India, is named after the summer palace of the Dalai Lamas in Tibet. It has been training artisans in traditional crafts since 1995, giving new purpose and employment to many young Tibetans in exile. In the early 1980's, Kalsang Yeshe, Minister of the Department of Religion and Culture, and his wife, Kim Yeshe, began to imagine an institute in India which could act as a cradle for the preservation of Tibetan art, and provide a haven for artists to practice their crafts. Land was purchased in 1984 with funds provided by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and construction began in 1988 with generous donations. In 1996 His Holiness became Chairman of the Norbulinka trust.

Norbulinka Institute has given TFG permission to publish their 'Interviews with Traditional Craftsmen', artisans who have been apprenticed since their teens, to give an understanding and appreciation of the work they have devoted their lives to. Tenzin Gelek, statue making artist, has been learning and practising the art since 2003.

What were the reasons you joined the statue making at Norbulingka?

Since childhood, I was interested in art and hoped to one day acquire an artistic skill. I knew little about thangka painting or woodworking but had friends from my settlement who were working in the statue making workshop at Norbulingka Institute, and I listened with fascination when they narrated the work process of making a statue. I told my parents I wanted to make statue-making my vocation, and they supported my decision, I was 13 years old at the time. The Norbulingka admissions requested I send a sketch and after some time, I was told I was admitted as an apprentice in the statue making studio. I am proud to say that it was my personal wish and interest that led me to become a statue making artist.

How do you feel about your work? Did your interest grow with your skill?

I began my training as statue maker in 2003. In the 8th year of my training, I felt my interest waning, and was thinking to pursue another line of work. Then I was introduced to casting and made a statue using this technique. This process rekindled my interest and motivation. Casting requires patience,

hard work and determination but I realized that if motivation is strong, it leads to a sense of purpose. I was inspired by the need to preserve this art form and make it available to future generations and was fascinated with the stories behind the different deities, and how each has its own characteristics.

What do you like the best about your work? Do you have favourite things you like to do?

I like casting statues, working with gold, creating ornamental pieces for statues, stupas, and jewellery for statues. I would say this work is my favourite. I find making statues from copper sheets with the hand hammering technique difficult and very time consuming, taking anywhere between 3-4 months to finish a statue, whereas a cast statue is smaller and is completed more quickly.

What is the favorite piece you made?

My favorite piece is a 3ft silver Enlightenment stupa, *Jangchub chorten*. It was completely hand-beaten and took about 4 months to complete.



Where do you see yourself in 20 years? What do you want to accomplish by then?

It is difficult to evaluate and anticipate the future; I am deeply grateful to my late master Pempa Dorje la, under whom I had the privilege of working for about 10 years. This experience made me what I am today. Today, most young Tibetans have little interest in traditional art, even fewer in statue making. I would like to help younger Tibetans develop a love of this wonderful skill. I wish to continue honing my skills and pursuing my love for goldsmithing, making ornaments and jewellery.

Please go to www.norbulinka.org for more information about Norbulinka Institute

SETTLEMENT NEWS

DELEK HOSPITAL GOLDEN JUBILEE OCTOBER 2022

From Central Tibet Administration:

Dharamshala: Sikyong Penpa Tsering today presides over a special program to mark the Golden Jubilee celebration of Delek Hospital and to honour the personal physician of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and chief medical officer Dr Tsetan Sadutsang’s completion of 40 years of service at the hospital.

In his address, Sikyong Penpa Tsering highlighted the daunting task of the establishment of the hospital during its initial years when the Tibetan community was still in the early days of road-building and clearing of forests to set up settlement. As per the medical needs of those time, the primary health care centre was set up and successive administrators ran the hospital. Sikyong credited the combined effort of each and every staff for the success of the hospital. Hailing the determination of Dr Tsetan for returning to India to serve the community, Sikyong stressed that individual determination was crucial in serving the public. Likewise, he called the medical profession the most important as it provides relief from sickness and suffering, one of the harder parts of living. Furthermore, he thanked the donors without whom the hospital could not function.

Speaker Ven Sonam Tenphel hailed the progress that the hospital had made in the fifty years through the blessings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He emphasised the importance of compassion in patient care as hospitals have become more of a business-making enterprise. In the light of the same, he called upon the healthcare workers to inculcate compassion in treatment as per the wishes of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Chief administrator Dawa Phunki of Delek hospital shared the report of the outreach activities of the hospital besides their day to day functioning.

The history of the hospital titled “50 years of contribution to science and health” was inaugurated on the occasion followed by felicitation of Dr Tsetan and some long-serving staff of the hospital.

DELEK HOSPITAL STAFF WITH DIGNITARIES



PURUWALA (SAKYA TIBETAN SOCIETY)

CELEBRATING 75TH INDIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

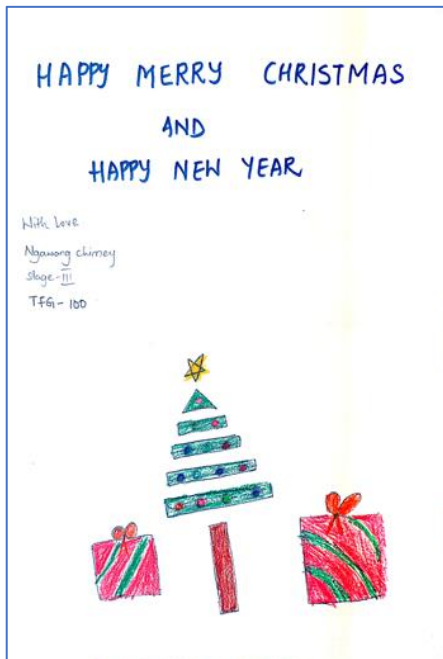
Puruwala Tibetan Settlement office celebrated the 75th Indian Independence Day Eve on 14th August 2022 at Sakya Tibetan Settlement Hall. Mr. Kunal Angrish (DFO) Paonta Sahib was the Chief Guest of the day, along with other guests from Abbot of Sakya Tibetan Institute Puruwala, Village Pardhan, Indo Tibetan Friendship members, Indian officials, Tibetan officials and staffs were the other guests with Tibetan settlers and school children also in attendance.



Puruwala school-children performed a number of Tibetan cultural dances and Hindi patriotic songs.

The celebration concluded with a thank you note by Mr. Tenzin Kunga, Secretary of the Sakya Tibetan society.

SAMBHOTA TIBETAN SCHOOL SOCIETY (STSS)



Christmas greetings from Tenzin Norphel-Sponsorship Coordinator STSS

“Dear Sponsors, on behalf of our students, staff and teachers we would like to take this opportunity to extend our deepest gratitude and heartiest thank you to all our generous sponsors, supporters, and well-wishers. We are indeed appreciative of your unwavering support and will never take it for granted.”

TIBETAN CHILDREN'S VILLAGE (TCV)

The Mission of Tibetan Children's Villages (TCV) – an integrated charitable organisation – is to ensure that all Tibetan children under its care receive a sound education, a firm cultural identity and become self-reliant and contributing members of the Tibetan community and the world at large.



TIBETAN ALPHABET BLOCKS

Manjushri Educational Services (MES) has kindly donated 3 sets of newly developed Tibetan Alphabet Wooden Blocks to Upper TCV School, Dharamsala to be used in the Pre-Primary classrooms and Baby Creche. The new Tibetan Alphabet Wooden Block will definitely make the teaching and learning fun and enjoyable for both the teachers and the students. As such, the school wholeheartedly appreciate this generous donation from MES and thank MES team and the sponsors for their continued support in providing some of the educational resources.

TILOKPUR NUNNERIES



*The Mahakala Puja is performed to eliminate all obstacles and negative forces that hinder one's spiritual path

FROM THE TILOKPUR NUNS

"Very warm good morning to you and all the TFG sponsors and friends. As the Christmas festive is on the way, we the nuns of Karma Drubgyu Thargay Ling Nunnery would like to wish Merry Christmas to all the TFG sponsors and friends for their continuous support.

From the 1st Dec of 2022 the nuns have been given their exams which include written, oral, and debating. This will continue until 7th of Dec. After that they will have three days break and will continue their new session of classes.

For Losar (Tibetan New Year) they will be busy with *Mahakala puja, and Arya Keshema (Winter gathering) at Varanasi for one month before returning to the nunnery."

TIBETAN HOMES FOUNDATION

WITH THE HELP OF TIBETAN HOMES FOUNDATION, DORJEE, AN ORPHAN, KNOWS HE WILL BE WARM FOR THE WINTER - by admin November 29, 2022 - Article from Tibet Relief Fund:

Built into the sides of steep mountains in the Indian Himalayan region, Tibetan Homes Foundation school in Mussoorie is home to hundreds of Tibetan children, many of whom are far away from their families in Tibet, India and Nepal. While beautiful, the winter months here can be harsh, and the old school buildings are often covered in thick layers of icy snow.



Tibetan Homes
Foundation
Mussoorie

On the 15th December every year, the school closes for the winter months, and most children return home to their families. Children whose parents can't afford to care for them, or who are orphans, like 16-year-old Dorjee, must remain in the empty, freezing-cold school.

Dorjee has been an orphan since his mother died when he was five years old. Since then, Tibetan Homes Foundation has been his family, providing much-needed care, support and guidance. Dorjee has made many friends at school, too. But it is heartbreaking for him each winter when they all go home to their families, leaving him to sleep alone in his dormitory.

Thanks to our Winter Care Programme with Tibetan Homes Foundation, Dorjee knows he will be kept fed, warm and cared for over the winter.

TIBETAN INSTITUTE OF PERFORMING ARTS (TIPA)

World Premiere of Play 'Pah-lak' Performed at TIPA

The play depicts a story of a Tibetan nun opting self-immolation as a non-violent mean to fight for her freedom under the Chinese Communist Party's repressive policy of re-educating Tibetan dissidents. It was performed multiple times at the Royal Court Theatre in London by non-Tibetan artists in its original English version. At the behest of writer Abhishek Majumdar, the play was later

translated into Tibetan for casting Tibetan artists by the director of Tibetan theatre Lhakpa Tsering's tireless effort and German theatre artist Harry Fuhrmann's voluntary support.

Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang of the 17th Tibetan Parliament in Exile and Shri Ajit Nehria, the president of Indo-Tibetan Friendship Association attended the play as the chief guest and special guest respectively.

The play written by Abhishek Majumdar and jointly directed by Lhakpa Tsering and Harry Fuhrmann was also attended by various dignitaries including Acting Chief Justice Commissioner Karma Dadul, standing committee members of the Tibetan parliament in exile, Secretaries of the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama along with representatives of schools, monasteries and NGOs based in Dharamshala.

The team consisting of directors, artists, and crew members will present the play at various Tibetan settlements in India.

WORLD PREMIERE

The world premiere of the Tibetan theatre production 'Pah-lak' delivered in the Tibetan language and casting Tibetan artists, was performed at the auditorium of Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA) in the evening of 1 October 2022.



TFG FINANCES

<u>FUNDS TRANSFERRED TO SETTLEMENTS JUNE 2021 TO JUNE 2022</u>	
TIPA	760.00
Delek Hospital	5,400.00
Tilokpur Nunnery	3,366.00
Tibetan Childrens Village	990.00
Sambhota	4,797.00
Sakya Tibetan Society -Puruwala	4,290.00
Jamyang Choeling	1,100.00
TRSHC	2,190.00
Tibetan Homes Foundation	-
	22,893.00

AN APPEAL FOR MORE SPONSORS

Our TFG settlements in India are always in desperate need of more sponsors for nuns, children and elderly Tibetans. If you have family or friends who are interested please ask them to contact us. Here are ways you can help.

One Time Donation

Make a “once off” donation to a TFG program in need of funds.

Regular Donations

Make a regular monthly, quarterly or yearly donation to a TFG program of your choice.

Sponsorships

Sponsor an older person or nun for \$25 per month or a school student for \$30 a month.

A Donation in Celebration

Celebrate a special occasion by making a donation or ask family and friends to make a donation on your birthday rather than buy a gift.

A Donation in Memory

Make a donation in memory of a loved one. TFG can send a card acknowledging your gift to their partner or family.

Bequest

Leave a gift to TFG in your will. Your generosity will enable us to continue our programs in the future.

From all of us at TFG we thank you for your support!

CONTACT DETAILS

MAIL: TIBETAN FRIENDSHIP GROUP AUSTRALIA (INC)
PO BOX 1347, DEE WHY, NSW 2099
EMAIL: tfgpresident@gmail.com
WEBSITE: www.tfg.org.au

PAYMENT OPTIONS FOR DONATIONS

CHEQUE: PAYABLE TO TIBETAN FRIENDSHIP GROUP AUSTRALIA (INC)
DIRECT DEPOSIT: CBA BSB: 062 173 ACCOUNT NO: 2802 0627
PAYPAL: VIA WEBSITE